

Language Revitalization as Rebuilding a Speech Community



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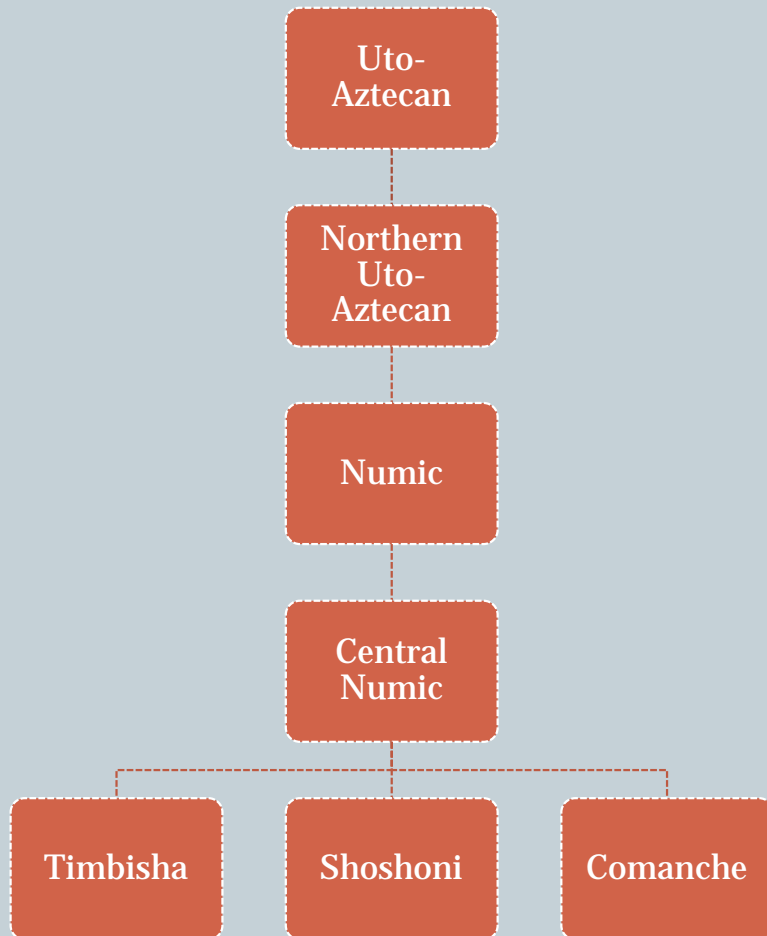
Shoshoni Language Project
THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH



Who we are

- **Wick R. Miller Collection
Shoshoni Language Project,
University of Utah**
- **Project began in 2002**
 - Focus--to preserve and disseminate Miller's collection
 - NSF: #0418351, PI: M.J. Mixco, Co-PI: M. Di Paolo. 2004-2007.
- **In 2007, focus shifted to
revitalization**
 - Barrick Gold of North America Inc. PI: Marianna Di Paolo. 2007-2014.

Shoshoni Language: Past & Future



- Wick Miller predicted that Shoshoni would probably be gone by the late 20th century
- Few children were using it in the home by the late 1960's
- US Census estimate 2006-2010
 - 2,211 Shoshoni speakers
 - 1,319 living in tribal communities

Shoshone/Goshute Communities





What is a speech community?

From an anthropologist
(Gumperz 1972:463)

“A linguistic community is **a social group** which may be either monolingual or multilingual, **held together by frequency of social interaction patterns** and set off from the surrounding areas by weaknesses in the lines of communication.”

(Emphasis is ours.)



What is a speech community?

From a sociolinguist
(Labov 1972:120)

“The speech community is not defined by any marked agreement in the use of language elements, so much as by **participation in a set of shared norms; these norms may be observed in overt types of evaluative behavior**, and by the uniformity of abstract patterns of variation which are invariant in respect to particular levels of usage.”

(Emphasis is ours.)



What is a speech community?

Themes

- **Frequent interactions by members of the community** using the language variety in question
- **Shared language norms** among community members, which influence their linguistic behavior
- **People** who derive a sense of **identity** from the community and together **constitute** the community



Why do languages die?

- Languages don't die out because of a lack of dictionaries, or grammars, or classes, or recordings.
- Languages die out because they don't have speakers who are actively using the language in a supportive speech community.
 - Members of a speech community keep a language alive by using it frequently to interact in domains conducive to child language acquisition.



Rebuilding the speech community

When the intergenerational transmission process has been interrupted and the speech community has begun to unravel, what can be done to restore its structure?

- Must the intervention to rebuild the speech community begin in the home?
- Can community-level revitalization work?
- What role can a university-based program play in rebuilding a speech community?



Rebuilding the speech community

Frequent interactions

Shared language norms

Sense of identity

The Shoshoni Language Project

- Revitalization focused on jumpstarting the process of rebuilding a speech community
- Emphasis on sustained, long-term effort supporting community revitalization programs.



Rebuilding the speech community

Frequent interactions

Shared language norms

Sense of identity

Challenge: Limited Domains

- Some homes (e.g., Duckwater, Ft. Hall, Yomba, Ibapah)
- Prayers, songs, and ceremonies
- Handgame
- Council meetings (e.g., Ibapah, Duckwater)



Rebuilding the speech community

Frequent interactions

Shared language norms

Sense of identity

Challenge: Generation Gap

- The majority of speakers are elders
- Most adults don't use the language at home with each other on a regular basis
- Current youth generally *don't* speak it and were perceived as apathetic to language issues
- Very few young children are currently acquiring Shoshoni at home

Rebuilding the speech community

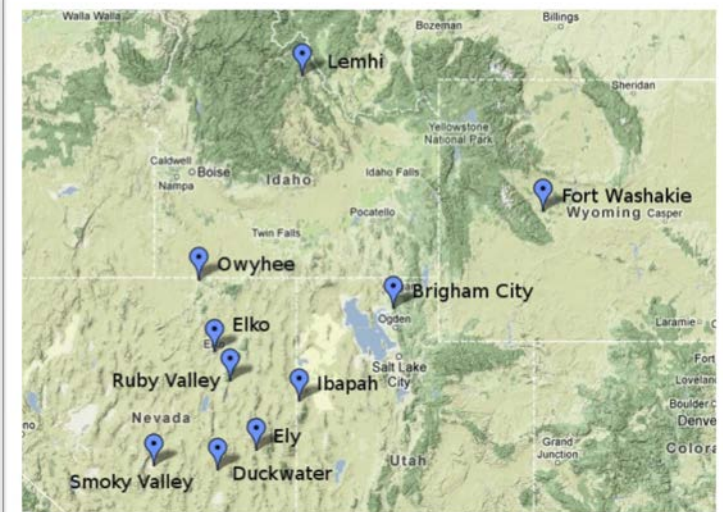
Frequent interactions

Shared language norms

Sense of identity

Challenge: Population Density, Dispersal, and Economics

- Small communities
- Large traditional and current territory (~1200 miles)
- Few resources





Rebuilding the speech community

Frequent interactions

Shared language norms

Sense of identity

Challenge: Language Attitudes

- Linguistic purism & criticism
 - Variety-based purism (post-reservation)
 - ✦ Criticism or rejection of different dialects
 - ✦ Koinezation
 - Learner-based purism
 - ✦ Criticism of L2 learners
 - ✦ Criticism of Shoshoni child language?



Rebuilding the speech community

Frequent interactions

Shared language norms

Sense of identity

Confronting the Challenges

Bringing people together with the common goal of strengthening the language of their community

- “Teacher” Workshops
- School-based Programs
- SYLAP
- Future Workshops for “Receptive Bilinguals”

Rebuilding the Shoshoni Speech Community

Teacher Workshops

- Target: fluent speakers and teachers
- Semi-annual, two-day events, hosted in communities



Interactions

- ↔ • among teachers and fluent speakers in different communities
 - Increasing frequent interactions in the language
- ↑ • between older generation of speakers and young learners
 - Reinforcing intergenerational transmission of the language

Rebuilding the Shoshoni Speech Community

School-Based Programs

- Target: children, especially young children
- Community-run programs (PreK/Head Start, K-6, high school)



Interactions

- ↔ • among young learners within a community
 - Redeveloping young peer groups of speakers
- ↕ • between older generation of speakers and young learners
- ↕ • between older speakers and adolescent / young adult future teachers

Rebuilding the Shoshoni Speech Community

SYLAP

(Shoshone/Goshute Youth Language Apprenticeship Program)

- Target: high school students
- 6-week summer internship and university language course



Interactions



- between students and elders



- among peers from different Shoshone communities
 - Redeveloping adolescent peer groups of speakers
 - Sustainability for generations to come
- preparing next generation of parents



Rebuilding the Shoshoni Speech Community



Future Workshop

- Target: adult receptive bilinguals / heritage language learners
- Three-day intensive workshop interacting with fluent speaker elders
- Using the WRMC transcriptions and recordings for advanced learners

Interactions



- between young adults and elders



- among peers from different Shoshone communities



- supporting the current generation of parents
 - Laying the groundwork for intergenerational transmission via parental involvement

Rebuilding the Shoshoni Speech Community



Shared Language Norms

- Early teacher workshops helped teachers see commonalities rather than differences.
- Students learn about shared norms through interacting with elders.
- In SYLAP, workshops and projects, different dialects are honored.

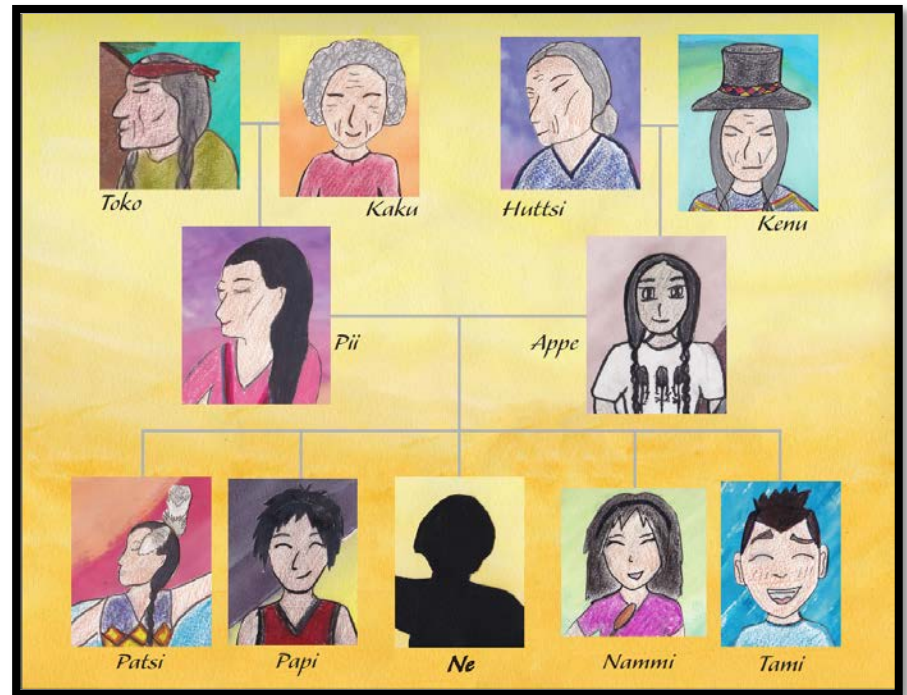
Sense of Identity

- Early teacher workshops helped to create a sense of identity around the language across tribal boundaries.
- Students learn what it means to be Shoshoni through interaction, cultural activities, and language use.
- Interaction between elders and learners helps construct identity.
- Social media strengthens new relationships.

SLP Projects



- WRMC narratives & recordings
- School curricula
- Online dictionary
- Talking dictionary
- Children's books
- Video books
- Video game
- Firefox localization



Wick R. Miller Collection



- 80 hours of recordings
- Collected in the late '60's and early '70's
- Over 400 narratives
- First volume of narratives in preparation (origin stories)



Curricula



Levels

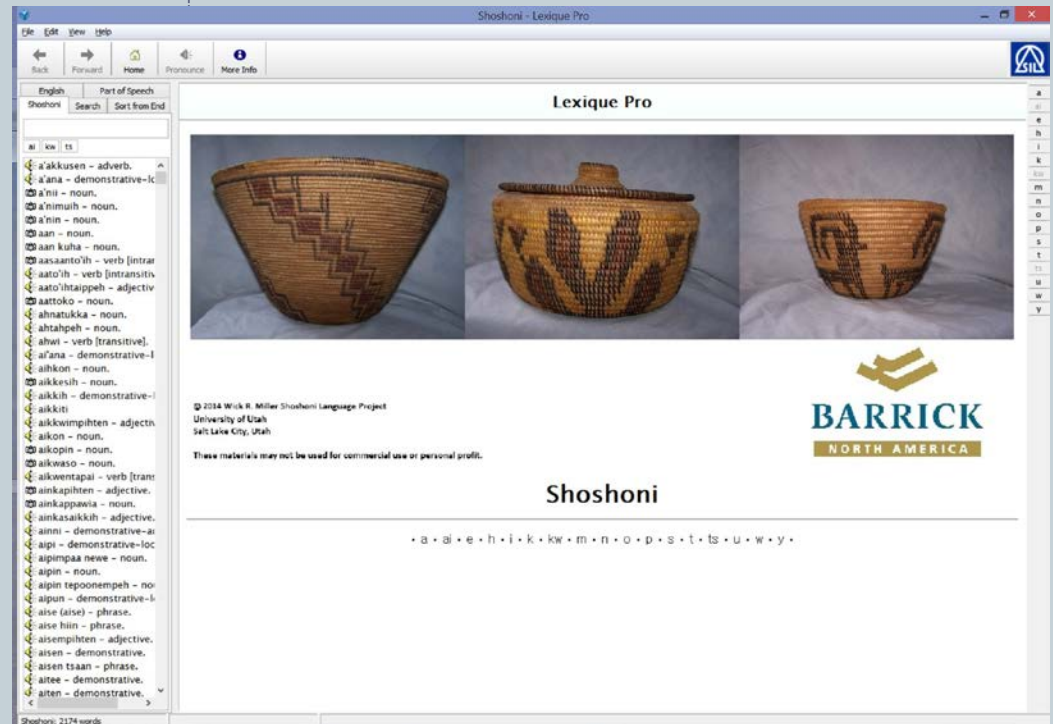
- PreK/Head Start
- K-6
- High school
- University

Collaborating Communities

- Owyhee, Elko (Nevada)
- Ibapah (Utah)
- Ely (Nevada)
- SYLAP

Dictionaries

- Shoshoni online dictionary
- Shoshoni Talking Dictionary
(online and on disk)



Children's Books → Video Books

Topics include:

- Traditional Stories (4 titles)
- Instrumental prefixes and body parts
(*Pia Kuittsun Tua*)
- Deictic verbal and nominal suffixes and verbs of movement
(*Sokopittan Nanewenee Hakainikku Nuante?*)
- Berry Picking (*Tammen Tekkappeh Yekwina*)
- Pine Nut Gathering (*Newe Tepa Yekwinna*)
- Family members (*Ne Nanemenee*)
- Colors, numbers and nouns
(*Kutise Itsappeh, Newe Tetsee*)
- Nature (*Ne Toko ma'ai Mimiakonto'i*)
- Alphabet (*Tammen Newe Tepooh*)



Kutise Itsappeh - Crazy Coyote (Published)



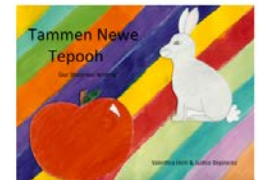
Ne Toko ma'ai Mimiakwantu'i - I'm Going on a Walk with Grandpa (Published)



Nian Nanewenee - My Family (Published)



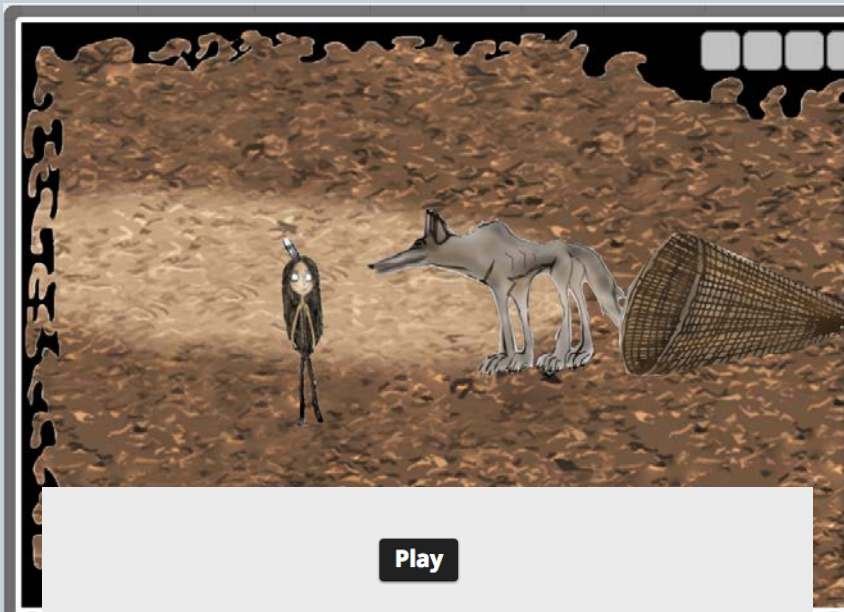
Newe Tetsee - Counting Indian (Published)



Tammen Newe Tepooh - Our Shoshoni Writing (Published)

Technical Projects

The *Enee!* Video Game



Play

The Enee Game

A Shoshone Language & Culture Video Game

Enee is a 2D adventure / fetch quest game that teaches Shoshone language and culture to anyone in the world that wants to learn it. Enee achieves this by having the main character explore and experience a world full of Shoshone stories while immersing players in fun gameplay.

Coming soon...

- Beautiful Mars
- Firefox localization





“We cannot allow our beautiful Indian languages and cultures to fade from existence. We are in a critical time and we must all use every means available and work together to protect, educate, share and breathe life into our *newe* language. Each one of us has a part in this.”

Bryan Hudson
Shoshoni Language Teacher



www.shoshoniproject.utah.edu

References and Acknowledgements



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- Barrick Gold of North America, Inc.
The Wick R. Miller Collection: Returning to the Community. Principal Investigator: Marianna Di Paolo. 2007-2013
- The Shoshone and Goshute communities
- Shoshoni Language Project staff, past and present
- SYLAPers